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Chairman: Mr. LEHMANN (Denmark)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 140: UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW (A/50/368 and Add.1 and 2)

1. Mr. CORELL (Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, The Legal Counsel), introducing the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/368 and Add.1 and 2), said that 1995 had been a significant year for the international legal community. First, the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations had provided an opportunity to reaffirm the principle that international relations must be based on the rule of law. Secondly, that year marked the mid-point of the United Nations Decade of International Law, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/23 of 17 November 1989. Thirdly, in accordance with the programme of activities for the third term of the Decade (1995-1996), and as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration, the United Nations Congress on Public International Law, a historic gathering of lawyers from all branches of international law, had been held at Headquarters from 13 to 17 March. The Secretariat was currently compiling the proceedings of the Congress, a job which had been left unfinished owing to the financial situation of the Organization.

2. The procedural information contained in chapter I of the report was followed by an analysis in chapter II of replies received from States and international organizations. The replies were summarized under five headings, corresponding to the five main sections into which the programme was divided. The full texts of the replies received, in the original language, were available for consultation in the Codification Division of the Office of Legal Affairs.

3. The activities undertaken were numerous and varied. However, since the report was based on a relatively limited number of replies, many initiatives had not been given the publicity they deserved. For example, the Foundation for the Development of International Law in Asia was publishing the Asian Yearbook of International Law, one editor of which was Mr. Christopher Pinto, former member of the International Law Commission.

4. Chapter III provided supplementary information on United Nations activities in the field of progressive development of international law and its codification, one of the main purposes of the Decade. In addition to eight specific areas, there were separate sections on the work of the International Law Commission, the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, and the Sixth Committee.

5. The question of what activities were to take place at the end of the Decade should be decided by the States Members of the United Nations. The Secretariat would provide support to activities decided upon by the General Assembly; however, in case such support was needed, it was important to notify the Secretariat in advance so that the necessary preparations could be made.

6. Mr. MAZILU (Romania) said that the current session of the General Assembly had witnessed a growing number of concrete activities designed to achieve the purposes of the Decade. One of the major achievements was the United Nations Congress on Public International Law, which had given participants an

opportunity to exchange views on the progressive development, codification and application of public international law, in theory and in practice.

7. Among the activities carried out by his country were the updating of its programmes of study in accordance with General Assembly recommendations and the organization of postgraduate courses and other relevant forms of training for young lawyers and diplomats. New institutions and associations had also been created, including the Romanian Institute for Human Rights, the Romanian Association for the United Nations and the Association for International Law and International Relations. Those organizations had sponsored many conferences, round tables and symposia. The Romanian Institute for Human Rights had also published many basic documents in that field.

8. As a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), his Government had actively promoted the norms and principles of the Helsinki Final Act and all the other documents adopted by OSCE, among them the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, adopted in December 1994, which established the principles and norms governing armed forces in democratic societies and relations between States, as well as relations between States and their nationals in the military field. The Code also underscored the determination of OSCE members to act as one if the Organization's norms or commitments were violated and to facilitate concerted responses to security challenges.

9. Discussions organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights had focused on the basic norms and principles relating to the rights and responsibilities of individuals, groups and organs of society with respect to the promotion and protection of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. An OSCE seminar on tolerance had been held in Bucharest in May and another, on tourism, had been held in November.

10. His Government was actively promoting the norms established under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and took the view that optional protocols were needed on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on child pornography.

11. It was essential to take more action in the field of youth education, in particular in relation to crime prevention and criminal justice. Despite the existence of important international instruments in that area, growing numbers of young people were involved in criminal activities such as illicit drug trafficking. His delegation therefore endorsed the proposal of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to elaborate a convention on transnational crimes not covered by existing instruments and a convention against illicit trafficking in children.

12. As the main legal body of the General Assembly, the Sixth Committee should concentrate on increasing the efficiency of its codification activities; Romania was prepared actively to participate in the Working Group of the Whole on the Law of the non-navigational uses of international watercourses, in order to draw up an appropriate convention in that field as soon as possible. The Sixth

Committee should request broader dissemination of United Nations publications in the field of international law.

13. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) could and should do more in organizing education and training seminars and symposia in the area of international law, as well as publishing related United Nations documents and opinions.

14. The Sixth Committee, through its Working Group on the Decade, should continue to be a coordinating body, monitoring all activities related to the Decade, since successful implementation of its objectives would make a significant contribution to guaranteeing the primacy of the rule of law in relations among all States.

15. Mr. LAVROV (Russian Federation) said that, in consonance with the aim of the United Nations Decade of International Law, the statement by the President of the Russian Federation to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly had contained a proposal to hold a third international peace conference in 1999.

16. That proposal was prompted not only by the humanitarian traditions of Russian foreign policy (since it had been at the Russian Federation's initiative that the first and second peace conferences had been convened in 1899 and 1907), but also by the need to improve existing legal instruments and formulate new instruments which would allow the international community to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. He was gratified that a number of countries and United Nations bodies had expressed their interest in the proposal, and considered that such a conference would contribute to improving "peace technology".

17. The conference might usefully consider such topics as establishing systems for settling conflicts, formulating standards for enforcing and maintaining peace, developing the legal foundations of international sanctions, bridging the gaps in international humanitarian law and establishing a universal criminal justice system. Such deliberations would not detract from the work undertaken by the United Nations and other international forums on those topics, but would lend extra impetus to areas requiring closer consideration.

18. Tne proposed conference might not only serve as a forum for adopting a declaration or other international legal instruments, but could contribute to formulating a new philosophy regarding the "new generation" conflicts and ways of dealing with them. It would also constitute an appropriate forum for celebrating the centenary of the first International Peace Conference, held in The Hague in 1899, and the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of International Law in 1999.

19. United Nations participation in preparing and holding the conference would not be merely of a symbolic nature; changes occurring in the world throughout the past 100 years demonstrated that the Organization could help to ensure that the results of such a conference would serve as point of reference in the quest for international justice and legality.

20. His delegation felt it would be useful to hold a series of meetings of national experts from Member States that had shown the most interest in the proposal, and was open to dialogue on the content, organization and holding of the third peace conference, including the question of level of representation. He would be grateful for any ideas on those issues from members of the Sixth Committee.

21. In the Russian Federation, the National Committee for the United Nations Decade of International Law was responsible for efforts to meet the goals and objectives of the Decade. The Committee functioned under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was composed of prominent intellectuals and jurists, members of parliament and representatives of national legal institutions and of the business community. During the course of 1994, the Committee had organized a series of events with the participation of international law experts from various countries and planned to organize short-term international law courses for judges, attorneys, barristers and law-enforcement officials in early 1996 in Moscow. In late January and early February 1996, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the National Committee would hold a seminar on issues relating to international humanitarian law and, in 1996-1999, it would organize conferences on topical issues of international law in St. Petersburg, Kazan and Moscow. In 1995, the Russian Federation had started publishing the Moscow International Law Review in English.

22. By decree of the President of the Russian Federation, a congress on legal reform would be held in February 1996. It would be attended by representatives of federal authorities, local authorities, political parties and other civic associations, as well as by the academic community.

23. Finally, he commended the activities of the Sixth Committee in implementing the programme of the third stage of the Decade and considered that the Working Group should continue to coordinate the programme.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m